

LUCY'S WISHES,

OR

The Folly of Idle Thoughts.

BY JANE TAYLOR.



NEW-YORK:

Mahlon Day, 374 Pearl-street,
1836.



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Receive what comes, whate'er it be,
Submissive to that high decree
Which wills eternal good;
Though rough the shell by nature given,
The kernel is the will of heaven,
The most substantial food.

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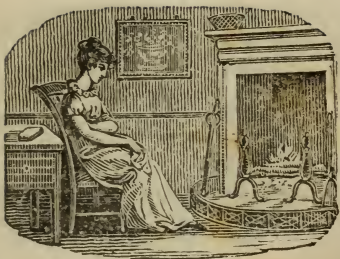
LUCY'S WISHES.



LUCY had been standing one afternoon for nearly an hour at the parlor window, watching the carriages and passengers in the street. Idleness ever begets discontent; but instead of laying the blame upon herself, she felt disposed to complain of her condition. Almost every stranger that passed, she concluded was in happier circumstances than herself. She observed stages and carriages of various kinds, driving up to the great inn on the other side of the way. She watched the passengers as they alighted and set off again; wondered who they were, whence they came, whither they were going, and envied them because they were not staying at home. A travelling chaise, with

ladies in pretty riding dresses, stopped to change horses. Ah, thought she, how happy they are! going some delightful journey,—hundreds of miles perhaps, and to see thousands of curiosities: or to live at some elegant country seat; at any rate they are not staying at home like me. How long have I been confined to this dull town, and this one house? She then cast a forlorn glance around the room, every object of which had been familiar to her from her infancy. Then looking over to her opposite neighbors, she saw a blazing fire, and the family seated round it. How comfortable they are! thought she; so cheerful, so sociable; telling some interesting story, perhaps; not all alone in a dull room like me?

When it grew too dark to see distinctly what was passing in the street, Lucy slowly moved from the window, and seated herself by the fire; where, fixing her eyes upon the red cinders, she fell into a deep revery; and began



to consider what situation she would choose for herself, if she might but change her condition. Her imagination still followed the travelling party she had seen stop at the inn; and she first thought she should like to be a companion to those ladies; to read to them, walk with them, and attend them wherever they went. "But how foolish!" thought she; "while I am wishing, why not wish myself one of the ladies themselves? Yes, yes, a rich heiress, very handsome, fortune at my own disposal; a thousand a year--no, five,--or suppose ten thou-



said a year. Should my father and mother be alive?—perhaps they would not allow me to travel, and do as I pleased,—so they should have been dead some years, and I would have a very agreeable young person for a companion. But poor papa and mamma!” thought Lucy, “no no, they should not be dead then; but still I should have the fortune in my own hands, and do just what I pleased with it. And I would be an only child, and not have any brothers or sisters to teaze me.” She next proceeded to settle the number of her servants, the color of her carriages and liveries;

in what counties she would have her country seats, and in what square her town house; till the number of her wants, and the splendor of her establishments, increased so surprisingly, that she began to fear her means would be insufficient, and she found it expedient at once to increase her income from ten to twenty thousand a year.

Just as Lucy had arrived at this conclusion, her mother entered the room, and put a stop to her meditations. She was beginning to converse with her daughter about the book they had been reading together in the morning; but Lucy, finding that subject very dry in comparison with her late brilliant speculations, soon interrupted it, by relating as much as she thought proper of what had just been passing in her mind. Her mother, when she had finished, endeavored to prove that she would probably not be at all happier for such a change of circumstances. Lucy knew not what

to say to her representations ; yet she did not feel convinced, and said, “Well, then, mamma, if wishing were of any use, and if you were exactly in my place, what would *you* wish for? —What is the happiest situation in all the world that you can think of?”

“If wishing were of any use, then,” said her mother, “I might, in the first place, wish to be about that age when the dangers of infancy and the follies of childhood are past: but when the opportunities and advantages of youth are yet to come. I would not wish to be grown up, because then the character is fixed; and I should lose the unspeakable advantage of having it yet in my power to form a good one. I might also wish for a sound vigorous constitution. With regard to personal beauty, as there are some disadvantages connected with it, and as many who do not possess it make greater proficiency in the things most important to happiness than those who do, I would not wish about it;



but make up my mind to be contented with whatever external appearance I happened to have. I should certainly wish to have kind parents; not such as would indulge my follies and spoil my temper; but parents able and willing to train me up in the way I should go, to impart useful instruction, and correct my perverse dispositions. I would also wish for brothers and sisters, some of them nearly of my own age; as it would not only render my life more social and cheerful, but give me an opportunity of cultivating amiable and generous

feelings, instead of growing selfish and self-important, as is sometimes the case with an only child. I might farther wish my parents to be in easy circumstances, such as would allow them to give me a good, useful education, to supply my common wants, and to afford me a few rational pleasures; but I would by no means wish them to be very rich, nor in the highest ranks of society, because it is universally allowed by men of the greatest wisdom and experience, that persons in the middle ranks of life are the most advantageously circumstanced for the attainment of virtue and happiness. Nor would I by any means wish for a fortune in my own hands till I was well qualified to manage it: for there cannot be a greater misfortune than for a person to be left to their own guidance at the early age we are supposing. I would only wish, therefore, for a moderate allowance from my parents, such as would enable me to indulge a few reasona-



ble wishes, and that I might have a mite of my *own* to give to the poor, and to contribute towards some of the institutions for doing good to my fellow-creatures. In addition to all this I might, if it were worth while, wish to live in an agreeable neighborhood, where there were a few young people of my own age and rank, with whom I might occasionally associate. I might also desire to live in a pleasant convenient house, with a garden; perhaps I might wish my parents to allow me a little garden of my own, to cultivate at my leisure hours; and

that my own room should be furnished with a suitable library, and other means of instruction and amusement; and I would have regular hours for business and recreation."

"O how delightful!" exclaimed Lucy; "I can fancy exactly what kind of a house and garden it is, and what kind of people they are. I think you are a very good wisher indeed; now that is exactly what I should like."

"Indeed!" said her mother; "and who do you think is the fortunate young person I have been thinking of all the time, with whom you would so much like to change places?"

Lucy thought for a moment, and then exclaimed, "O mamma! you have been playing me a trick: you have been thinking of me, I do believe! Yes for I am just the age that you said; and I have kind parents to instruct me, and they are not very rich; and I have brothers and sisters of my own age to associate with, and

a few young friends besides ; and I have an allowance to do what I please with ; and I am not very handsome ; and I live in a convenient house, tolerably pleasant, with a garden, and have a garden and room of my own, and books and globes ;—dear, how foolish I was not to find it out at first ! Well but how is it then that am not as happy as I thought I should be with all those things ? Why was I so dull and uncomfortable this afternoon, that I thought every body better off than myself ?”

“I’ll tell you the reason, my dear,” replied her mother ; “we have still left something out. The situation I described, and in which precisely you yourself are placed, is certainly, as far as outward things can go, one of the happiest in the world ; and in such a world as this, a change for you would almost certainly be for the worse ; but then we must remember that no situation, no possible combination of circumstances, can make us

perfectly happy in this world, because it is a sinful world. When we fancy others better off than ourselves, it is only because we know our own circumstances, but do not know theirs. Those ladies whom you imagine to be so happy only because they were travelling, and wore pretty riding dresses, have, very probably, some outward trial, or some secret uneasiness, which makes them less so than you. But besides this, there are, as I said, some things which we have forgotten to include in our list of desirables and they possess this great advantage above all the rest, that if we wish for them aright, wishing will not be vain. I would therefore, in addition to all we have mentioned, wish for an amiable, obliging disposition; a cheerful, open temper; a peaceable and contented spirit. I would wish, also for industry and activity, which are the best securities against languor and discontent; and without which, no circumstances can

make us happy. Above all, I would desire a good conscience, and a heart right towards God. 'These are things, my dear Lucy, which, if we wish for, not feebly or lazily, but seriously and earnestly, may certainly be obtained.—With these, in any circumstances, we shall be happy; and without them, we should not be contented, even with twenty thousand a year."

THE END OF LUCY'S WISHES.

SINCERITY.

Perform thy part with cheerful mind;
 Do thy best with heart resign'd;
 Keep faithfully thy heavenly call,
 Whatsoever may befall;
 Do all as to thy God alone,
 Who sees thee from his sacred throne;
 Then whether thou succeed or fail,
 Distressing fears shall not prevail;
 When God is pleased, shall *man* despise
 The humble heartfelt sacrifice?



RESIGNATION.

Nothing choosing or resisting;
 Doing all things God assisting;
 To His will thine own resigning;
 In His path thy steps confining;
 Where he spreads thy table feeding;
 Poor pilgrim, *these* will give thee rest,
 Though anxious, wearied, and distress.



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